

Hillary Clinton's Possible Senate Candidacy

Q. Have you encouraged Mrs. Clinton to run for the Senate, sir? What have you said to her?

The President. People in New York started calling her. I don't think it had ever occurred to her before a lot of people started calling and asking her to do it. I think she would be terrific in the Senate. But that's a decision that she'll have to make. And for reasons I'm sure you'll understand, she hasn't had anything like adequate time to talk to the people who think she should do this, much less people who think perhaps she shouldn't. I mean, she just hasn't had time to deal with this.

But it's her decision to make. I will support whatever decision she makes enthusiastically.

She has a lot of other opportunities for public service that will be out there, and she and I both would like to continue to be useful in public affairs when we leave office. But it's a decision she'll have to make. She'd be great if she did it, but she hasn't had anything like the requisite amount of time to talk to people and to assess it, and I'm sure that everyone will understand and appreciate that.

Thank you.

NOTE: The exchange began at approximately 11:30 a.m. in Hacienda Temozon. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks to Business Leaders in Merida
February 15, 1999

Mr. President, Mrs. Zedillo, distinguished Mexican officials, members of the Mexican Congress, the Governor and First Lady of Yucatan, the mayor and the people of Merida: Let me begin by thanking all of you for the wonderful reception you have given to me and to Hillary, to the members of our Cabinet, the Members of Congress, our entire American delegation.

Hillary and I came to Mexico 24 years ago for what I believe you call our *luna de miel*, our honeymoon. And your country has been close to our hearts ever since. I want to especially thank President Zedillo for joining me in building the closest, most candid, most comprehensive relationship in the long history of our two nations.

Merida faces the Caribbean and the interior. It looks north and south. It combines Old World architecture with a thriving indigenous culture. In many ways, therefore, this city symbolizes the new, inclusive community of the Americas, a community of shared values and genuine cooperation. I thank the Members of the American Congress of both parties whose presence here with me today is evidence of America's commitment to the common future we will make together.

Nothing better symbolizes the sea change in our sense of hemispheric community than the partnership between the United States and Mex-

ico. Not so long ago, the great Mexican writer Octavio Paz said, "The North Americans are outstanding in the art of the monolog." I'm glad to say we have turned the monolog into a dialog—a dialog of mutual respect and interdependence. Today, we speak with each other, not at each other. From different starting points, our courses are converging in our common commitment to democracy and in the absolute certainty that we will share the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

We honor President Zedillo and all the people of Mexico for the steps you have taken and are taking to deepen your democracy. Now, as your people deliver their votes for democracy, we must all do what we can to make sure democracy delivers for them, for democracy will only endure if we can build the quality of life it promises.

That is the challenge we are addressing here today. I start with the good news: As President Zedillo has said, our economic relationship is strong, and we are making it even stronger. Our decision to let Mexican and U.S. airlines engage in joint sales and marketing will generate many millions of dollars in new revenues, not only for the airlines but for the travel and investment potential of our countries. It will benefit especially tourism regions like the Yucatan. We also

agreed today to enable the Ex-Im Bank to provide up to \$4 billion to keep U.S. exports such as aircraft and construction equipment flowing into Mexico and to maintain Mexico's position as Ex-Im's top market.

This year we celebrate 5 years since NAFTA entered into force. There were many doubters then. But look at the facts now: Since 1993, our exports to each other have roughly doubled. In the United States alone, a million jobs depend on this trade; that is up 43 percent since 1993. Of course, we still have work to do on labor, environmental, and other issues. But NAFTA has taught us that we have far more to gain by working together.

We learned that lesson again 4 years ago when the United States was proud to assist Mexico in restoring confidence in the peso. President Zedillo acted decisively and courageously. The Mexican people made tough sacrifices to speed recovery. The United States was right to support you, and you have followed the right course.

More recently, we all agree that our trade relationship has helped to insulate both countries from the global financial crisis that has caused such hardship elsewhere. In 1998, while U.S. exports to the Pacific Rim dropped 19 percent, our exports to each other went up about 10 percent. We must expand this oasis of confidence and growth in our hemisphere by creating a free-trade area of the Americas. And we must stand by our friends in the hemisphere when they face the difficulties of the moment—particularly President Cardoso of Brazil, whose reforms ultimately will help the Brazilian people and all the rest of us as well.

Today we did good work to deepen our partnership beyond economics. As the President said, we are joining together to help our Central American neighbors. We're improving public health along our border. We're working hard to protect the natural resources we share. As we learn more about pollution problems along the border, we're better able to respond to them, including through the institutions created by NAFTA.

Today we've agreed to strengthen our cooperation in fighting forest fires and air pollution, in cleaning our water, and in moving against climate change, the greatest global environmental challenge of the next century.

We have also made progress in areas today where, to be charitable, we have not always

agreed. Not long ago, we could not have had a conversation about drugs without falling into an unwinnable argument about who is to blame. That has changed. The American people recognize we must reduce our demand for drugs; the Mexican people recognize that ending the drug trade is a national security and public health imperative for you.

We can talk candidly about this now because we have started to speak the same language: the language of parents who love their children; the language of citizens who want to live in communities where streets are safe and laws are respected; the language of leaders who recognize that our responsibility is to protect our people from violence and our democracy from corrosion.

In 1997 President Zedillo and I committed our countries to an alliance against drugs. "Alliance" is not a word to be used lightly. It means that what threatens one country threatens the other and that we cannot meet the threat alone. If a town in Mexico lives in fear of traffickers who enrich themselves by selling to our citizens and terrorizing Mexican citizens, that is a problem we have a moral duty to solve together.

We have increased our cooperation. I welcome the plan Mexico announced 2 weeks ago to invest an additional \$500 million in the fight against drugs. The United States is ready to do all we can to support you. I offered our support to Mexico's newly established Federal preventive police force. We will expand consultation on cross-border law enforcement. We agreed to important new benchmarks that will actually measure our mutual success in the war on drugs.

We must also tackle the problem of corruption that bedevils every nation fighting drugs. I want to acknowledge President Zedillo's efforts in Mexico's interests to root out this scourge. Much has been said in my country about the extent of the problem you face. But let us not forget that what we know in America comes largely from Mexico's brave efforts to get to the truth and air it. Mexico should not be penalized for having the courage to confront its problems.

Another sensitive issue that has divided us all too often is immigration. The United States is a nation of immigrants, built by the courage and optimism of those who came to our shores to begin life anew. We continue to accept large numbers of legal immigrants, and we continue

to have our borders crossed every year by large numbers of illegal immigrants. As we welcome new immigrants, we must also strive to manage our borders. I say to you that we will do so with justice, fairness, and sensitivity. We will also work to promote safety and human rights at the border. And as we agreed today, we must work together to stop the deadly traffic in human beings into and through our nations.

Ten years ago our relationship was marred by mistrust. Today, we recognize that any complex relationship will have its ups and downs, but we know our differences cannot divide us. President Zedillo and I have invested a great deal in our partnership. We intend to lay the groundwork for the next generation of leaders to follow, people who will build on the legacy all of us have worked hard to create. The way we approach our problems now will define how our successors—not just our leaders but ordinary citizens—in Mexico and the United States will live their lives for decades to come.

Mexico is the largest Spanish-speaking country in the world. Before long, the United States will be the second largest Spanish-speaking country in the world. Almost 15 million United States citizens trace their ancestry to Mexico. Twenty-eight percent of our foreign-born population come from here. Every year our border is legally crossed about 250 million times. With each crossing, we move beyond mere diplomacy, closer to genuine friendship, a human friendship between two peoples who share the same con-

tinent, the same air, the same ancestors, the same future.

We are more than neighbors. More and more, we belong to the same American family. Like any family, we will have our differences, born of history, experience, instinct, honest opinion. But like any family, we know that what binds us together is far, far more important than what divides us.

Not long after Merida was founded, a Mexican poet described the renewal that comes every year at this time to those who wisely till their fields and plant ahead, in these words: “Here, by the Supreme Giver, one and all, in stintless grace and beauty, are bestowed. This is their dwelling. These, their native fields. And this, the tide of spring in Mexico.”

This tide of spring has brought a new season of friendship between Mexico and the United States. President Zedillo, people of Merida and Yucatan, I wish you a happy Carnival. For all of us, I pray that we will reap the full harvest of the season. *Agradezco a los Mexicanos de todo corazón*. Thank you, Mexico.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. in the Teatro Peon Contreras. In his remarks, he referred to President Ernesto Zedillo of Mexico and his wife, Nilda; Gov. Victor M. Cervera of Yucatan and his wife, Amira; Mayor Xavier Abreu of Merida; and President Fernando Cardoso of Brazil.

Remarks on Legislative Priorities for the Budget Surplus

February 17, 1999

She was great—give her a hand. [*Applause*] Great job. Well, thank you very much, Sharon. You did a great job, and I feel better knowing that you’re out at NIH, doing great work there.

I would like to thank Secretary Rubin and Commissioner Apfel and Senator Robb and Representative Baldwin. I’d like to thank Congressmen Levin and Hoyer for being here, and the members of the administration; all of the young people here from your various organizations. We have young people here from City Year and AmeriCorps. We have young people here from the University of Maryland, from the

James MacGregor Burns leadership program. We have young people here who are doing other things with your lives, who consented to come.

I want to talk a little today in greater specifics about the nature of the choice facing our country now. For 200 years, the test of each generation of Americans has been not simply how well they did in their own time but whether they left our country in better shape for future generations. Because of the size of the baby boom generation, to which the First Lady and I and a few others in this room belong, we have a